APPLICATION FOR PATENT

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Title: **Ear-Nut With Handles and Handle Separator**

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

Ear Nut With Handles and Handle Separator

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

A clasp, such as an ear-nut, for gripping the post of an item which is secured by a post, which passes through a body part, or clothing. The most common use of such post-mounted items is for earrings intended for pierced ears, but such post-mounting may also be used for brooches, lapel pins, or other jewelry items that are mounted through pieces of clothing. Nametags and identification badges are similarly mounted. Thus the term "Jewelry Clasp" as used herein encompasses such uses to the extent permitted by prior art.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Ear-carried ornaments or earrings are frequently mounted by means of a post, which projects from the back of the ornament, for passing through a pierced ear lobe or other parts of the ear. Withdrawal of the post is prevented by an ear-nut which is screwed onto a threaded post or slid onto a post which has an outer surface that may be smooth, notched, or ringed. Usually such a slide-on ear-nut has a base plate with a center opening and a pair of bent-out fingers which are rolled into a circular shape to be positioned so that a portion of that circular shape will frictionally engage the outer surface of a jewelry post when the post is pushed through the center opening in the base plate. When removing the jewelry or ornament the ear-nut must first be slid off the post with sufficient force to overcome the engagement friction. In order to grip the ear-nut for

removal, the user will usually, perhaps inadvertently, grasp the pair of circular rolled fingers mentioned above. Therein lies the problem; these rolled fingers are difficult to grip and, the tighter one squeezes them, the greater is the engagement friction to be overcome. Thus there is a long felt need for an easier way to grip an ear-nut for removal from a post of a piece of jewelry or ornament.

The original ear-nut with handles (patent application serial # 09800828) had a pair of friction fingers which could be slid or screwed onto and off a jewelry post in the usual manner, but also incorporated two added rearward projecting gripping tabs, which were not connected to the friction fingers. When the user gripped these tabs, engagement friction was not increased, since these gripping tabs were independent of those friction fingers used to secure the jewelry post. However, it was subsequently found that if too much force was applied, the rearward projecting gripping tabs could easily be squeezed together, thus making the original ear-nut with handles less easy to manipulate. The ear-nut with handles and handle separator addresses this problem by adding a metal separator of a round (or any open) shape, (such as an oval, square, rectangle, in the shape of an animal, star, or ball) providing the contemplated shape prevents the gripping tabs from being pressed together by the pressure of the user's fingers, and does not interfere with the engagement of the post and the friction fingers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a jewelry clasp such as an ear-nut which has a typical pair of rolled fingers which allow it to be screwed or slid onto and off a jewelry post in the usual manner. This clasp also has two added rearward projecting gripping tabs which

are not connected to the friction fingers, and so allow the user to separate the jewelry post from the clasp without increasing the engagement friction. These gripping tabs are preferably longer and/or wider than the friction fingers so a user can readily find them, even when unseen behind the ear. These gripping tabs may be of any shape such as oval, square, rectangular, U-shaped, or round, as long as they are longer and/or wider than the gripping fingers. Additionally, this new version of the ear-nut features a round (or any open shape that clears the post, including for example the shape of an animal, a rectangle or square, a star, etc.) metal separator attached between the two gripping tabs, which keeps these tabs from being squeezed together. This round or any open-shaped separator that clears the post may be separately cast and then soldered onto the ear-nut, or the ear-nut which incorporates the separator may be stamped as one piece.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a typical prior art jewelry clasp for post-mounted earrings or ornaments.

Figure 2 is a side view of the present invention showing the gripping tabs.

Figure 3 is a side view of the jewelry clasp shown in Figure 2 showing the metal separator.

Figure 4 is a top view of the jewelry clasp of Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 5 is a bottom view of the jewelry clasp of Figures 2-4.

Figure 6 is a method view from the side of the jewelry clasp of Figures 2-5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

For a better understanding of the problem of removing prior art ear-nut or jewelry clasps, one need only review Figure 1. Rolled fingers 12 extend from base plate 26 and frictionally engage post 14 at area 16. Frequently area 16 has a notch or a plurality of circumferential rings on post 14 so as to increase the frictional engagement of fingers 12 against post 14 by screwing the threaded post 14 through an appropriate hole taking the place of hole 28. Frequently a user will attempt removal by gripping outer surfaces 13 and 15 of fingers 12. But such gripping only compounds the problem because the tighter one squeezes, the greater the engagement friction at area 16, and the tighter fingers 12 grip post 14. Additionally, fingers 12 are delicate, small, and smooth, which makes it difficult for a user to get a firm grip on them. It would be better for the user to grip base plate 26 by, for example, getting a fingernail under the base plate, but in the case of short finger nails or a base plate that presses tightly against the ear, this can also prove very difficult to do.

Instead of this self-defeating gripping, the present invention provides user gripping tabs 22 as shown in Figures 2-5. The present invention has a base plate 26 having a pair of spring biased friction fingers 12 which are rolled in the conventional manner into two curved ends which project below opening 28 in base plate 26. When a jewelry post 14 is inserted through opening 28, the fingers 12 will frictionally engage post 14 in the usual manner. However, in the present invention, instead of attempting to grip fingers 12 when one seeks to remove the clasp or ear-nut, the user may grip gripping tabs 22. Gripping tabs 22 are not directly connected to fingers 12 and, as a result, inward pressure on gripping tabs 22 does not affect the friction engagement between fingers 12

and post 14, and the clasp or ear-nut is thus made easier to remove, without compromising the security of connection between the ear-nut and the earring post 14. Although gripping tabs 22 preferably have a smooth, polished surface that complements the entire jewelry piece, gripping tabs 22 also incorporate an indent and outward bend 24 as visible in Figures 2 and 4. This shaping of the gripping tabs 22 makes gripping much easier for the user. Gripping tabs 22 may be circular with a center indent as shown in Figures 2 and 4, rectangular, U-shaped, or of another shape suitable for gripping.

A metal separator of a round or any open shape 40 is affixed between gripping tabs 22 to keep the gripping tabs 22 from being squeezed together by the user's fingers. This round, or any shape, metal separator, may be stamped as one piece, and may also be cast separately and soldered with hard solder. Other methods of attaching the metal separator 40 may also be contemplated, and the metal separator 40 may also be affixed to an ear-nut or ear-nut with handles which features a stabilizing mechanism. The separator 40 is especially helpful in the case of ear-nuts made from lighter materials, such as thin gold. In Figure 2, the view of the metal wire separator is obscured by gripping tabs 22.

As shown in Figure 2, the friction fingers 12 are preferably positioned diametrically opposite each other at the twelve o'clock and six o'clock positions. The gripping tabs 22 are preferably positioned diametrically opposite each other at the nine o'clock and three o'clock positions. The metal separator 40 joins with gripping tabs 22 at two opposite points, thus creating a barrier between each gripping tab 22 which prevent the gripping tabs 22 from being squeezed together.

Figure 3 shows a side view of the ear-nut in which the metal separator 40 is visible, and is suspended by its attachment to gripping tabs 22 at a point on each of the

tabs 22 that allows the metal separator 40 to clear the post 14 of the earring to which the ear-nut will be attached.

Figure 4 shows a top view of the ear-nut and again illustrates how metal separator 40 is attached at two points to gripping tabs 22. Also visible here are friction engagement fingers 12, and the base 26 of the ear nut. If a post 14 were inserted into the ear-nut through hole 28 (not here visible) of base plate 26, said post 14 would then be visible through the central gap in the separator 40, and in between friction fingers 12.

Figure 5 shows a bottom view of the ear-nut in which base plate 26 is clearly visible. Figure 5 illustrates how opening 28, preferably centrally located in base plate 26, preferably has a funnel shaped center depression 30 which facilitates threading or sliding of said post 14 into opening 28. Opening 28 and post 14 may also be manufactured so that the post 14 is threaded, and then screwed into opening 28 to further increase the security of the joining of post 14 and the ear-nut.

Gripping tabs 22 visible in figures 2-4 preferably project away from base plate 26 a greater distance than fingers 12 and/or are also wider than fingers 12 so that it is easier to find the gripping tabs 22 to ensure their use in clasp or ear-nut removal. Their larger size also makes them easier to grip, particularly when the indentation 24 is present. For convenience in manufacture, both fingers 12 and gripping tabs 22 may be an integrated part of base plate 26, with the base plate first being flat with four projections which are subsequently bent to form fingers 12 and gripping tabs 22. However, it is also contemplated that fingers 12 and/or gripping tabs 22 could be later secured, as by jeweler's solder, to base plate 26.

Figure 6 shows a method view from the side of the ear-nut shown in figures 2-5.

In this view, post 14 of earring 41 is pushed through a hole in an earlobe. The user places a finger and a thumb, for example, on gripping tabs 22, and slides post 14 through hole 28 (not visible) and in between friction fingers 12 in order to secure earring 41. The metal separator 40 prevents gripping tabs 22 from being pushed together, thus increasing the ease with which earring 41 is attached and later removed from the securing ear-nut.

Additional variations of the inventive ear-nut are also possible and contemplated that will fall within the spirit and scope of this invention as further defined by the claims that follow.